

VZCZCXRO5190
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHBP #0443/01 1071301
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 171301Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5258
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 0244
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0025
RUESKT/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0007
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0004
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 0183
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 0080
RUEOMFD/USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHTRO/USLO TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAMAKO 000443

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF, AF/W, AF/SPG, NEA/MAG, INR
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [EINV](#) [LY](#) [ML](#)

SUBJECT: THE "FRERE GUIDE" QADHAFI CAUSES A STIR IN MALI

REF: A. DAKAR 00877 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. BAMAKO 00421 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. BAMAKO 00321 (NOTAL)

BAMAKO 00000443 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: Classified by: Ambassador Terence P. McCulley, Embassy B
amako,
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Libyan leader Mouammar Qadhafi arrived to great fanfare in Mali on April 6 to celebrate the April 11 prophet Mohammed,s birthday (Mawloud). After a two-day stay in Bamako, Qadhafi and Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) headed on a 2-day road trip to Timbuktu. In a controversial move, Qadhafi led the Mawloud prayer and delivered an inflammatory speech, glorifying Islam and calling for collective armed opposition to foreign influence in the Sahara region. Qadhafi and regional religious leaders went on to sign a 8Grand Sahara8 Pact for a unified front against imperialism. Qadhafi also used the opportunity to privately meet with recently resurfaced Malian national guard deserter and former rebel leader Fagaga, while at the same time snubbing local Malian authorities. The Mawloud festivities proved to be a logistical nightmare, and foreign dignitaries and visitors alike were largely left without hosts, accommodations, and food. Not all were surprised by Qadhafi,s provocative sermon, as the Mawloud event in Timbuktu had been hyped long before Qadhafi,s arrival as a counterpoint to the Danish cartoons controversy. Still, his divisive comments and the disastrous logistics of the Libyan-organized event seriously undermined Qadhafi,s image and public confidence in his commitment to Malian development. END SUMMARY.

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

[1](#)2. (C) Qadhafi,s arrival was by no means a subtle affair. Week-long tributes and announcements in the major newspapers and posters and flags all over the capital city made the Guide,s visit one of the most hyped and publicized events in Mali,s recent history. The government newspaper &L,Essor8 described Qadhafi,s arrival in Mali as a moment of &intense joy,8 as the Guide was greeted at the Bamako airport by an official delegation led by President Toure, music, dance, and folklore. Visibly enjoying the elaborate welcome, Qadhafi stated, &I am delighted to come back once

more to my second homeland and to be with my dear brother, ATT. I am not a foreigner, Mali is my country and I say it sincerely.⁸

13. (C) Following his visit to Mali,s capital, Qadhafi embarked on a two-day road trip to Timbuktu with ATT, though the Guide apparently lost track of the Malian president en route, arriving in Timbuktu without him. The scene in Timbuktu, Qadhafi,s destination for the Mawloud holiday, was an even greater spectacle than the capital. Embassy staff traveled to Timbuktu days before the arrival to find the city transformed into a Libyan town. Posters of the &Frere Guide⁸ up to 30 feet in size, African maps with Libya highlighted, and welcome banners in both Arabic and French lined the streets. In Timbuktu,s stadium, the venue for the Mawloud prayer, pictures of Qadhafi flanked the stage and walls, illuminated by flood lighting that was visible from miles away and temporarily interrupted the city,s power supply. The green flags and pictures of the Guide throughout town far outnumbered Mali,s national flags and posters of Malian President ATT. Tent villages) including a small fortress for the Guide himself, complete with air conditioned and electrified living quarters, security fencing, and guard posts) sprung up all around town.

IMAM FOR A DAY

14. (C) Qadhafi made few friends with his posture during his visit to the City of 333 Saints. The Guide arrived two hours before ATT and sped around the city, ignoring official attempts to greet him and present him with the key to the city, and instead basking in the crowd,s cheers. The Guide proceeded to unilaterally move the Mawloud prayer from Tuesday, April 11, to Monday, April 10, and, according to

BAMAKO 00000443 002.2 OF 004

officials, &scandalized⁸ the religious authorities by leading the Mawloud prayer rather than ceding the stage to Timbuktu,s Grand Imam Essayouti. Most newspapers noted Qadhafi,s leading the prayer as unusual, with some harshly criticizing the Libyan president for &playing Imam.⁸

A SAHARAN PACT AGAINST FOREIGN INFLUENCE

15. (C) Adding to the controversy, Qadhafi delivered a 95 minute incendiary speech glorying Islam and blasting the imperialist influence of foreign governments and NGOs in what witnesses described as &very poor Arabic,⁸ translated into even poorer French. Qadhafi,s visit followed on the heels of already controversial comments made in Dakar on the occasion of Senegal,s independence celebrations (Ref A). Spectators in Timbuktu were left confused and disoriented by the Guide,s ramblings. In the speech, Qadhafi called for all humans to adopt Islam as their religion and used citations from the Koran to identify Islam as the only religion accepted by God. Qadhafi called for the northern tribes to take up arms against foreign spies and fundamentalists, oddly naming several international NGOs, including MSF (Doctors Without Borders) among those unwanted entities. According to Embassy contacts, he stated that presidents Bush and Chirac, as well as other Western leaders, are &as impure as beads of sweat⁸ and advocated for the creation of a unified Sahara from Mauritania to Iraq as a &tinderbox, in which imperialism will perish.⁸ Qadhafi assembled various dignitaries and religious figures on the margins of the festivities to sign a &Grand Sahara⁸ charter, though the content of the alleged agreement has not been publicized.

QADHAFI,S PASSIONATE TIRADE RINGS HALLOW

¶16. (C) In reference to the Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed, Qadhafi described the cartoons as an insult to all believers. Continuing his bizarre and confusing commentary, Qadhafi went on to say that true freedom of expression would call for depictions of Jesus with a nuclear bomb on his head or surrounded by naked women, since Christians had invented the atomic bomb and embraced female nudity. Qadhafi questioned the authenticity of the Bible, arguing that only the Barnabas Gospel, which states that Islam would replace Christianity, can be considered the real biblical text. He cited the presence of many Muslims in Europe and the US as a sign that Islam would one day dominate the world.

¶17. (C) Conveniently, Qadhafi said little to highlight the) to date largely unfulfilled - Libyan contributions to Mali,s development. While in Timbuktu, he did promise to provide funds to revive the Niger canal that once provided Timbuktu with water at the gates of the city. Qadhafi also made a stop in Segou en route to Timbuktu to ceremonially lay the cornerstone for a Libyan-financed new mosque and conference center. With the newly-opened Libyan consulate in Kidal and apparent Libyan-Malian fraternity, expectations for Libyan development assistance are growing among the northern population. Embassy contacts in the northern regions, however, have voiced skepticism that concrete actions will follow the numerous promises and proclamations. Qadhafi also disappointed expectations by failing to commit funds for desperately needed new roads in the Timbuktu region.

LOGISTICAL NIGHTMARE

¶18. (C) Against most press accounts, the festivities, which witnesses claim far surpassed the extravaganza of an earlier visit to Timbuktu by French President Jacques Chirac, proved to be a logistical nightmare and embarrassment for both Libya,s and Mali,s Presidency. At least 100,000 people, more than three times the population of Timbukutu, flocked to City of 333 Saints for the festivities. The crowd far exceeded the logistical capacities on the ground, and many went without food, beds, and facilities. In a meeting with the Ambassador, Algerian Ambassador Abdelkrim Gheraieb

BAMAKO 00000443 003.2 OF 004

described the event as a complete and utter disaster. Of the two dozen invited heads of state, only a handful arrived, in part due to poor organization and protocol. Those present included Ely Ould Mohamed Vall of Mauritania, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Mamadou Tandja of Niger, and Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone. Mali,s National Assembly President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who recently delivered a scathing speech in the National Assembly criticizing the president (Ref B), and other government officials were also present. According to Ambassador Gheraieb, the diplomatic community was represented by six African and Middle Eastern Ambassadors. Other VIPs included the Vice President of Chechnya and a Special Emissary of Sudanese President Bashir, though the latter apparently returned to Khartoum within only a few hours of arriving after being deserted at the airport and left stranded at a downtown hotel without accommodations and means of contacting the Libyan organizers.

¶19. (C) Ambassador Gheraieb himself was appalled by the substandard treatment the VIPs received and reported the same of the Chechen VP, who received a comparable welcome to Bashir,s emissary. According to the Ambassador, air conditioning in the hotel rooms and cars did not function, and water was unavailable from 9:00 a.m. onwards, prompting most of the VIP guests to spend the night outside. The rest of the visitors hardly fared better, with accommodations overloaded and supplies short in stock. Officials admitted to food, water, and coal shortages, as well as tremendous price hikes and ubiquitous power outages during the

festivities, but publicly praised Qadhafi,s visit as a tremendous economic opportunity for Timbuktu. Most Timbuktu residents expected a food crisis to ensue following the delegation,s departure. Papers estimated the expenditures for the city at approximately 1.8 billion FCFA (\$US 3 Million) with only 250 million FCFA (US\$ 450,000) in returns.

One Embassy source with close ties to Qadhafi stated that the Guide had given the equivalent of US\$10 Million to Timbuktu for the festivities, though papers have reported an equally unconfirmed figure between \$6-7 million.

TETE-A-TETE WITH FAGAGA

¶10. (C) Before leaving Timbuktu, Qadhafi reportedly held a private meeting with recently resurfaced Lieutenant Colonel Fagaga (Ref C). Fagaga, whose reintegration in the Malian National Guard is still under discussion after several past instances of desertion and rebellion, was supposedly flown in by Qadhafi especially for the meeting, from which Malian officials were excluded. Fagaga has been a strong proponent of increased development assistance for his Tuareg following.

His future remains a mystery, and we have not been able to confirm rumors of either his reintegration into the Malian armed forces or a potential diplomatic role outside the country. Following his meeting with Fagaga, Qadhafi supposedly canceled initial plans to visit Kidal and Bamako before returning to Libya without a goodbye to the Malian president. Algerian Ambassador Gheraieb reportedly found the characteristically outgoing Malian president with his head in his hands at the Timbuktu airport, waiting in vain to see the Guide off.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) The disruption caused by Qadhafi,s visit to Mali comes as little surprise in light of the Guide,s reputation for extravagance and self-indulgence. The poor organization of the events in Timbuktu, though an embarrassment to ATT,s government, appears largely to have been the work of Libyan organizers that descended on the city weeks in advance. Habitually, the Government of Mali, when in control of large representational events in Bamako, ultimately manages to pull together a solid, smooth-running function. The fact that MFA protocol and local authorities were apparently left out of the loop in the planning process only seems to be further evidence of Qadhafi,s arrogant attempts to monopolize attention and distract from hollow promises. There has been little evidence to date of concrete Libyan development projects in Mali,s North, and the economic boom the Guide,s visit to Timbuktu was meant to provide failed to materialize.

BAMAKO 00000443 004.2 OF 004

The visit did little to boost either Qadhafi,s or ATT,s image abroad, and Qadhafi,s tirade against foreign influence is likely to have largely fallen on deaf ears. It is unlikely Mali,s northern population will put up with a repeat of this extravagance without the Libyans delivering on their pledges to foster Malian development and growth.
McCulley